

HOW TO BE EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR

Swiftwork clients, the Scottish Legal Aid Board and North Ayrshire Council are two of the six finalists in the LloydsTSB, Scotland, Employer of the Year awards. Scottish Legal Aid Board is also short-listed for an award in the 'Innovations' category.

These awards are organised by Parents at Work, which campaigns for and supports working families, and sponsored by LloydsTSB which heads up the group Employers for Work-Life Balance. The winner is to be announced on 10th October.

The Employer of the Year awards are made to employers with the best work-life balance policy and practice in Scotland. The sponsors are looking for organisations that help staff juggle their work and home life successfully, with innovative working patterns, enhanced leave provision and employee support systems.

SCOTTISH LEGAL AID BOARD

Scottish Legal Aid Board won DTI funding and began working with Swiftwork in August 2001. For senior management buy-in, the project had to meet clearly defined business objectives. These were: productivity; customer delivery; corporate reputation; staff well-being and morale; recruitment; retention; and sickness absence.

To meet these objectives, engagement with staff and managers' workshops were followed by multiple flexible working pilots.

The pilot schemes fell into three categories:

- ◆ **extended flexible hours**, which extended office hours to 7am – 9pm, Monday to Friday.
- ◆ **compressed hours**, involving a four-day week or nine-day fortnight.
- ◆ **homeworking** on a regular or occasional basis.

All the pilots, some of which combined two or more of the flexibility options, proved successful over a large range of measures at corporate and team level.

Some headline results were:

- ◆ improvements in productivity/performance for all pilots combined with a 45% reduction in overtime costs
- ◆ staff turnover down by 6.6% (on an annualised basis)
- ◆ a 19.4% drop in self-certified sickness absence, compared with a 13.5% reduction for non-pilot staff
- ◆ a 72% cut in recruitment advertising/agency costs

The business measures continue to improve and the impact on staff morale is well above expectations. The statement 'The Board is a good organisation to work for' in the staff satisfaction survey conducted at the start of this year, produced a positive response from 91% of staff. This was an increase of 24 percent compared to the previous survey conducted at the end of 2000. Flexible working and work-life balance are now fully embedded into the corporate culture.

NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

North Ayrshire Council only began working with Swiftwork last year so they are now nearing the end of the pilot stage. Nevertheless, the programme had already had a high impact on the working lives of employees and particular benefits have been noticed in social services; a function where flexibility is seen as difficult to achieve in most local authorities and where recruitment and retention are an issue.

Team-based self rostering works well for employees that need to provide service round the clock, seven days a week. Like most flexible working solutions, it requires a collaborative management style and a greater degree of trust both by managers and within teams. This effort is amply rewarded by reduced absenteeism and improved commitment from employees.

“The project has given us an opportunity to work in partnership with the trade unions in a very positive manner, fostering good employee relations,” says North Ayrshire Council’s Personnel Adviser, Jacqui Muir. “We are beginning to change the balance of power and responsibilities. Work-life balance is not about staff determining or demanding working patterns regardless of the impact on customers and other team members or managers rejecting options because they challenge the way things are done. The success of new patterns of flexible working is hallmarked by joint working and joint responsibility for addressing problems and finding solutions.”

SWIFTWORK’S SIX-POINT GUIDE TO BECOMING EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR

- 1 Gain senior management commitment** through assessment of key business objectives and how these might be met or exceeded by flexible working. Set up measurements to monitor results.
- 2 Consult employees** about how they would prefer to work and how they can better meet business demands.
- 3 Use workshops to train managers** in managing flexibility.
- 4 Pilot all change.** This way, anything can be tried but can be modified or stopped and no contractual changes are required. Piloting helps overcome fears that many managers may have about introducing new working practices.
- 5 Communicate.** Challenge the thinking. Encourage more creative solutions from teams. Learn from positive experiences.
- 6 Continue training managers and teams to embed culture change** and roll out best practices throughout the organisation.

Footnote:
If you would like more information about flexible working and achieving culture change, contact Gill Hayward. 01580 201661
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Swiftwork

MAKING FLEXIBLE WORKING WORK

MORE INFORMATION

The relevant section of the Employment Act 2002 is available at:

<http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/20020022.htm>

The draft Regulations are available at:

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/review.htm>

More flexible working topics can be found in the newsletter:

<http://www.flexibility.co.uk>

HOW SWIFTWORK CAN HELP

SwiftWork, as the specialists in flexible working can:

- ♦ advise on flexible working practices appropriate for your organisation
- ♦ help draft a policy framework
- ♦ provide flexible working guidelines for managers and staff
- ♦ provide training for managers in managing flexible working
- ♦ provide training in managing locations independent teams
- ♦ provide training for employees in responsible flexible working
- ♦ provide a complete, on-going, HR back-up service

SWIFTWORK REGULARLY RUNS
MANAGING FLEXIBILITY ONE DAY WORKSHOPS.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED PLEASE
EMAIL: ENQUIRIES@SWIFTWORK.COM

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